

Message Text

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17

ACTION AF-07

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-04 OMB-01 /054 W
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P R 290800Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY MBABANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7132

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MBABANE 2081

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, WZ

SUBJECT: KING SOBHUZA'S HEALTH

1. OVER THE WEEKEND OF OCT. 25-27, KING SOBHUZA SUFFERED
A BRIEF BUT SERIOUS ILLNESS.

2. ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, THE KING PRESIDED OVER THE
UNITED NATIONS DAY CEREMONIES AT THE NATIONAL STADIUM
AND GAVE A SHORT SPEECH. HE LOOKED HEALTHY, ALTHOUGH LESS
VIGOROUS THAN USUAL. THE NEXT DAY, HE WAS SCHEDULED TO
OPEN A TECHNICAL SECONDARY SCHOOL AT ENCABANENI. ALTHOUGH
HE APPEARED, HE STAYED ONLY A VERY SHORT TIME AND WAS
CLEARLY ILL. ACCORDING TO SECOND-HAND REPORTS FROM THE
DOCTOR WHO LATER ATTENDED THE KING, HE HAD LAPSED INTO
UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND WAS RUNNING A VERY HIGH FEVER WHEN
THE DOCTOR ARRIVED. AS OF OCT. 28, THE KING IS REPORTED
TO BE MUCH BETTER. THE DIAGNOSIS IS THAT HE WAS SUFFERING
FROM A SERIOUS BOWEL INFECTION.

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3. THE KING'S ILLNESS WAS OBVIOUS TO ALL THE GUESTS AT

ENCABANENI AND WAS REMARKED ON BY SEVERAL OF THE SPEAKERS.

4. COMMENT: KING SOBHUZA HAS BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN RECENT WEEKS, TRAVELING THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM, PROJECTING THE IMAGE OF A VIGOROUS AND ACTIVE MAN. THE KING HAS ENJOYED REMARKABLY GOOD HEALTH, BUT HE IS SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD. HIS ILLNESS, EVEN IF TEMPORARY, COMES AT A BAD TIME. TRADITION REQUIRES THAT SWAZI KINGS BE STRONG AND HEALTHY, PARTICULARLY DURING THE INCWALA CEREMONIES (DECEMBER AND JANUARY) WHEN THE KINGS ACTS AS THE SURROGATE OF THE NATION IN BRINGING THE BLESSINGS OF GOD AND NATURE, SUCH AS RAIN, TO THE SWAZIS. THE RAINS HAVE BEEN LATE THIS YEAR. DURING THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, THE TRADITIONAL SWAZIS WILL BE WATCHING EVEN MORE CLOSELY THAN USUAL TO SEE IF THE KING CAN SUCCESSFULLY PERFORM HIS RITUAL FUNCTIONS AND THE MODERN SWAZIS WILL BE THINKING EVEN MORE SERIOUSLY ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO SWAZILAND WHEN KING SOBHUZA GOES.

LANE

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